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Québec

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COMITÉ DE LA PROTECTION DE LA JEUNESSE

Studies and Research

The protection of sexually abused children ...What is the situation in Québec ?

Synopsis

Gouvernement du Québec
Ministère de la Justice

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LA PROTECTION SOCIALE DES ENFANTS
VICTIMES D'ABUS SEXUELS
... OÙ EN SOMMES-NOUS, AU QUÉBEC ?

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INTRODUCTION

What We Now Know about Child Sexual Abuse

Despite universal taboos, the provisions of criminal codes, religious denunciation and general condemnation, child sexual abuse would appear to have always existed and is still with us.

This being a social phenomenon, there is of course psychosocial literature on the subject (1); particular attention has been paid to the question in the past twenty years or so. Since there is a consensus of opinion in many areas among the authors consulted, we have been able to sum up what we know about child sexual abuse;

- although the number of reported cases of child abuse by adults grows every year, it is still far from representing reality; most cases are never reported, despite the fact that detection methods have improved somewhat;

- although both girls and boys are victims of sexual abuse, there are ten girls for every boy;

- most abusers are known to their victims, and almost all of them are men who were themselves abused in their childhood, either sexually, physically of emotionally;

- the most prevalent form of sexual abuse is incest, and three-quarters of known incest cases involve father-daughter incest;

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(1) American, for the most part

- studies have revealed a relatively high proportion of victims of sexual abuse, and of incest in particular, among young drug addicts, young prostitutes, young runaways, juvenile delinquents, youngsters in reception centres, young people who have made suicide attempts, and young patients either in psychiatric clinics or being treated by social agencies - this in itself clearly justifies our concern with the consequences of sexual abuse. Most of the facts on the after-effects of having been sexually abused in childhood, however, have not been provided by young people but rather by adults, who appealed for help after keeping their secret for so many years, because of personal, marital or family problems in later life;

- very few young victims benefit from appropriate psychosocial treatment, since treatment - whether through the judicial system or not - is aimed primarily at separating the sexual partners in order to prevent reoccurrence, and not at protecting the victim from the after-effects or repairing psychological scars;

- treatment - especially through the judicial system - is often traumatic in itself, adding to the trauma from sexual abuse.

Various Definitions of Sexual Abuse

What does the expression sexual abuse actually mean ? Although authors all have their own definitions, there are certain constants involved: an adult, a child and the ultimate aim of the adult's sexual gratification. We will be showing further on how the abuser may also be a young person, although generally older than the victim.

Sexual abuse is involved if:

- a child is led or forced into a complete or

incomplete sexual relationship (1);

- a child is used as a means of obtaining sexual gratification or an adult gives another person permission to use a child in this way (2);

- a child is led into a planned or unplanned sexual act with an older known of unknown partner, and deprived of his or her right to choose to participate in such an act (3);

- a child is sexually misused - Brand and Tisza speak in terms of sexual «misuse» instead of sexual abuse, and define it as the exposure of a child to sexual stimulation whitch is inappropriate for his or her age, level of psychosexual development and role in the family (4);

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(1) MAROIS M., PERREAULT, L., Social Work With Maltreated Children: A Time for Re-evaluation ?, Studies and Research, Book 2, Comité de la protection de la jeunesse, Ministère de la Justice, Gouvernement du Québec, Montréal, 1984.

(2) WALTERS, David R., Physical and Sexual Abuse of Children: Causes and Treatment, Bloomington and London, Indiana University Press, 1975.

(3) WIEDERHOLD, C., 1977: quoted by Beltrami, E., Couture, N., and Gagné, F., «Pédophilie homesexuelle incestueuse et non incestueuse au Québec», in La sexualité au Québec, Dupras, A., and Lévy, J., (book in press).

(4) BRANT, S.T. and TISZA, V.B., «The sexually misused Child», in The American Journal of Orthopsychiatry, January 1977.

- a dependent, developmentally immature child or adolescent is involved in sexual activities that he or she does not fully comprehend, is unable to give informed consent to, or that violate the social taboos or family roles (1);

- a child under 18 is involved in heterosexual or homesexual relations (complete or incomplete) or in sex play designed to sexually stimulate the child and/or use the child to sexually stimulate a partner (2).

In all situations involving sexual abuse, the following factors have to be taken into consideration: the relationship between the abuser and the child, the sexual activity, the child's age, the offender's age, the frequency with witch abuse takes place, the cultural values involved, the degree of constraint, the violence, and the child's environment and family situation. These factors combine to relativize the notion of sexual abuse.

Types of Sexual Abuse

Authors of literature on sexual abuse are in agreement as to the meanings of the following more widely used expressions:

Rape:	a crime committed by a man who uses violence to sexually abuse a girl or woman
Incest:	an illicit union between related individuals for whom marriage is prohibited
Sodomy:	anal coitus

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(1) KEMPE, Henry C., «Sexual Abuse, Another Hidden Pediatric Problem: The 1977 C. Anderson Aldrich Lecture», in Pediatrics, Vol. 62, No. 3, 1978.

(2) MESSIER, Camille et MARTIN, Gnislaine, Child Abuse in Québec, Studies and Research, Book 1, Comité de la protection de la jeunesse, Ministère de la Justice, Gouvernement du Québec, Montréal, 1983.

Gross Indecency:	marked departure from propriety
Pedophilia:	preference for children - sexual deviation whereby an adult uses a child for sexual gratification
Indecent Assault:	any sexual act excluding penetration or coitus
Illicit Sexual Relations:	those prohibited by law because of the age of the child involved.

Incidence of Sexual Abuse

The number of known cases of child sexual abuse is growing every year. It is, however, difficult to say whether the increase is due to the fact that there are more cases or that they are easier to track down.

When Henry Kempe pointed out that the Children's Division of the American Humane Society reported 5 000 cases of child sexual abuse for the United States in 1972, he added that «since only a small fraction of instances of sexual abuse are reported at the time of occurence, as opposed to those that come to light ten or more years later, it is our view that the true incidence must be at least ten times higher» (1).

In Québec, a study conducted by the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse, based on «Opération 30 000» data, identified 398 (6.3%) of the 6 300 abused children in the sample as victims of sexual abuse (2). The committee's own statistics show a marked increase in the number of cases of sexual abuse reported since the new Youth Protection Act came into effect: an average 43.5 children per month between January 15 and December 31, 1979, an average 62.9 children per month in 1980 and, in 1981, an average 66 children per month for an overall annual total of 800 cases of sexually abused children.

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(1) KEMPE, Henry C., «Sexual Abuse, Another Pediatric Problem...», in Pediatrics, Vol. 62, No. 3, 1978.

(2) MAROIS, M.R. PERREAULT, L., Social Work with Maltreated Children: A Time for Re-evaluation ?, op. cit.

The Youth Protection Act (1)

The Québec Youth Protection Act obliges all individuals, whether they be professionals or not, or bound by professional confidentiality or not, to report immediately to the director of Youth Protection the situations of children they have reasonable cause to believe are victims of sexual abuse - children whose safety (security) or development is compromised.

Section 38: «For the purposes of this act, the security or development of a child is considered to be in danger where, in particular:

...(f) he is the victim of sexual assault or he is subject to physical ill-treatment through violence or neglect.»

Now, let us take a look at what happens to these children once their situation has been reported to the director of Youth Protection.

The Right to Services

Since the Youth Protection Act came into force, the status of children has changed, with the emphasis now being placed on children's rights. Now, children on whose behalf protective measures are applied are officially vested with several rights: the right to remain in their natural environment (where this is considered possible and in their interests), to be heard, to be informed of the measures to be taken on their behalf, to consult a lawyer, to ask that the court review any decision made in their case, to have any discussion or communication with their parents, brothers or sisters or with their lawyer, recognized as private and confidential (unless the Court decides

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(1) S.Q., Chapter 20, passed in 1977, implementation as of January 1979.

otherwise), the right not to be placed in a house of detention (for adults) or in a police station, and the right to adequate services. Section 8 elaborates upon this right to services:

Section 8: «A child is entitled to receive adequate health services and social services and educational services, on all scientific, human and social levels, continuously and according to his personal requirements, account being taken of the organization of the ressources of the establishments providing such services.»

Procedure

There is a director of youth protection in charge of youth protection services in every social service centre. It is these directors (or persons delegated by them) who receive the reports regarding children in need of protection; first: they determine whether or not the cases are admissible. If the informant is considered credible, the report is retained for verification/evaluation/disposition; if the report is rejected, then the informant is advised and the matter ends there.

Second: the verification/evaluation/disposition results are analysed and the director of youth protection (or his or her representatives) makes a diagnosis or, in other words, decides whether or not the report is founded - whether or not the safety (security) and/or development of one or more children is in danger within the meaning of the Youth Protection Act.

Third: the director of youth protection (or his or her representatives) applies the emergency measures called for by the situation and tries very hard to obtain the cooperation of the parents (or of those assuming the role of parents) and of the child in implementing these measures.

Fourth: the director of youth protection (or his or her representatives) decides upon the appropriate disposition of the «founded cases»; these cases can take three possible directions:

- the file may be closed once the director has finished providing the short-term services involved if the child's safety or development is no longer considered compromised;

- legal action may be taken and the case referred to the Youth Court;

- the case may be referred to another service, in the social service centre or in another agency or establishment, for management and the implementation of «voluntary» measures - measures to which the child and the persons responsible for his or her care (parents, guardian, etc.) give their consent.

Fifth: the director of youth protection (or his or her representatives) takes on the responsability of any child whose safety or development is compromised. Even it the child's case is referred to another service, the director of youth protection remains responsible for that child - from the time the initial «diagnosis» is made - for as long as his or her safety or development is considered compromised.

Sixth: the director of youth protection (or his or her representatives) sees that all measures ordered by the Court in these cases are enforced.

The creation and definition of the responsibilities of directors of youth protection by the new Youth Protection Act brought about radical changes in child and family services within the social service centres. It meant that children whose cases were already being managed under the Act respecting health services and social services (1) were referred to the director of youth protection, who then became responsible for them; any intervention already under way, then, had to be endorsed and controlled by the director.

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(1) S.Q. Chapter 48, 1971

Furthermore, the director of youth protection remains ultimately responsible for children he or she refers to other social service centres for medium or long-term attention; this leads to an authority overlap within the same agency and can cause headaches for workers who have to follow up on reports, participate in «case meetings» or undergo case revisions, and so forth.

Comité de la protection de la jeunesse

The Youth Protection Act also created a new agency, the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse (CPJ). While the social service centres and youth protection directors fall under the ministère des Affaires sociales, the Comité comes under the responsibility of the ministère de la Justice. By virtue of the functions and duties defined in the Act, the Comité is charged with watching closely over children in need of protection, ensuring that this need is met by public social agencies and that their rights are respected. The CPJ becomes a sort of ombudsman, then, for children whose protection - within the meaning of the Act - is the concern of public social service agencies.

Although the procedures provided for by the new Youth Protection Act sometimes seem complicated and demanding for social service workers, they place the stress on the precautions that should be taken to ensure a child's protection. Any steps taken are bound to have a direct effect on the future of that child. The Youth Protection Act and its «precautionary procedures» upholding children's rights came into being, as we all know, after the Batshaw report came out in 1976 - the report of the study committee on socially disturbed children in juvenile institutions (reception centres). This report placed the emphasis on the «normalization» and satisfaction of the needs of children in need of protection and on the avoidance of stigmatization.

What the Batshaw Report Had to Say

...«There are too many severe risks attached to social and judicial intervention for these measures to be invoked lightly. The intrusion into the life of the child should be kept to an absolute minimum and only after serious consideration of the indications for active

intervention. There are two rules for minimal intervention:

1- if one must intervene, to do so as simply and discreetly as possible,

2- the involvement should also be as brief as possible with the objective of a prompt return to normal autonomous social living.

«For example, when a conflict involving a child can be resolved directly between the parties concerned, the decision can be worked out at the level of the social service centre (CSS), or local community health and social service centre (CLSC), rather than having recourse to the courts...»

This recommendation from the Batshaw report therefore associates «minimal intervention» with non-judicial intervention and «voluntary» measures.

«Minimal» intervention is not the same, however, as no intervention at all. In the case of a sexually abused child, non-intervention is risky, and rarely in the best interests of the child victim. These children often crop up later in institutional reports - as delinquents, runaways or chronic depressives, or because they have made suicide attempts. They made the transition from being victims to being «socially disturbed», and sometimes have gone through a very traumatic experience merely to attract our attention - a response to their cry for help.

Child Sexual Abuse: Judicial vs Social Intervention

The judicial solution is mostly a punitive one when applied to cases of child sexual abuse. Most of the time, it also entails separation of the sexual partners - inevetably, if the offender is imprisoned, but even if he is not. But does separation really prevent reoccurrence and, more important still, can it heal the «wound» ?

David R. Walters (1) has aptly described some of the pitfalls of judicial intervention, with specific reference to cases of father-daughter incest:

...«Sexual abuse is hard to prove and easy to deny:

. (It is the victim who has the burden of proof - a child who must denounce his or her own parent)... A report from a child is viewed with suspicion and mistrust by most authorities (...) Because of the inferior role of children, legal and social authorities often respond in a manner that results in the child's retracting the accusation. The doubts of the adults and the inferiority of the child are seen in the insistence on vaginal, psychological, psychiatric, and lie detector examinations of the victim, or alleged victim, of sexual abuse.

. When (...) attention is focused on the adult male who is abusing (...), the typical response is not theraputic but legal (...) The abuser usually responds by retaining counsel, and he is often advised not to discuss the events or situation with anyone; thus meaningful treatment is precluded (...) The motivation for therapy is often the avoidance of the legal consequences of sexual abuse. When the case is dismissed, nolprossed, or otherwise removed from the criminal justice system, the sexual abuser often views this as a vindication of his position and terminates the therapy»...

What is more, there is often a great deal of family pressure on the young victim. If she denounces her father, her family will be humiliated, and if the father is sent to prison, she may be the cause of its losing its principal or sole source of livelihood. The family may then have to cope with scandal as well as poverty... How can a child possibly hold up under this kind of pressure ? And yet, how can a case be built without the victim's testimony ? It is not very surprising that very few of these cases go to criminal court !

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(1) WALTERS, David, R., Op. cit.

Finally, the fact that this judicial and punitive approach to this type of problem is taken is a deterrent to other families looking for solutions to similar problems.

The Social intervention solution is a more «reparative» one, c ntred on the child's protection. Social intervention is designed to destigmatize the situation, rid the victim of any guilt feelings, build his or her self-esteem and autonomy, and prevent reoccurrence.

Since this approach is primarily concerned with «youth protection», it is hardly surprising that very little emphasis is placed on treating or «curing» the abuser. One of the problems, though, is that it is sometimes taken too much for granted that the pressure is off once that abuser is out of the picture. His absence, however, as we will see in the results further on, is not a guarantee of the child's safety - many children continue to be abused during visits with fathers who no longer live with them.

Would it not be better to combine, when necessary, judicial and social intervention in a joint effort at healing both the victim's «scars» and the abuser's or pedophile's «problem», so that the child and other children may be spared any further trauma ?

The Youth Protection Act and other family-related statute could possibly be amended to include clauses similar to section 33 of the federal Act respecting juvenile delinquents (repealed on April 1, 1984), with respect to certain offenses (incest, for instance), so that the Youth (or family) Court could hear these cases. The magistrate of the Youth (or family) Court could at any rate refer cases to the criminal court if he or she felt this was appropriate. We do feel that this clause would be a good thing (1), however, since it is very complicated getting

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(1) This opinion is a somewhat controversial one because of the penalty specified in the clause concerned. We feel, however, that it is necessary to take the blame off the child victim and place it where it belongs. Moreover, caseworkers have pointed out to us that, after a few interviews, victims, mothers and sometimes brothers and sisters - all victims, members, in effect, except for incestuous fathers - are generally quite willing to undergo therapy. Fathers, then, will not cooperate unless they are forced to.

these cases into the criminal court and since social service workers often require the support of a recognized authority in handling them (this kind of cooperation might be simpler with a less intimidating court than the criminal court).

Case Management: «Security» vs Development

The Youth Protection Act does not separate or counterpose these two terms, and there are no priorities involved. It says «(if) the security or development of a child is in danger». Obviously, children cannot develop unless their safety (security) is ensured, so the «danger» must be contained if the child to be protected is to develop fully.

Looking at the Act again, however, it is clear that once the child's «security» is guaranteed it is our duty to see that his or her developmental requirements are met, and therefore to determine whether or not the child's development is jeopardized even though his or her safety no longer is. We feel that it would be very shortsighted to interpret the obligations provided for in the Act as concerning the physical protection or safety of these children only, and not the after-effects of abuse which often threaten their development.

Recent Psychosocial Treatment Models

New clinical treatment models are now being applied - and with startling results. These models stress the intensive «therapeutic» treatment of all persons concerned, the term therapeutic being taken literally as a cure involving appropriate measures or means of healing and providing relief, of healing the wounds as well as possible so that the past can be dealt with without signing away or threatening the future. Although the investment required at this stage is fairly sizable, we feel that it is a small price to pay compared with that of years in prison and several lives ruined.

With these treatment plans, judicial initiatives are integrated into the various stages of psychosocial treatment. The latter

is real therapy, conducted in compatibility with the case management. It starts with individual therapy or counseling for the main persons concerned, moves on to become peer group therapy and then is altered to become dyad or family therapy. A complete psychosocial treatment program including all of these stages takes from one to three years.

When this kind of treatment is available (especially for incestuous families) but refused, given up too soon, ineffective or used merely to avoid imprisonment, many authors feel that the victims should be removed permanently from their home environments and, if they are very young, parental authority denied and adoption recommended.

These models are demanding. They call for much more than punishment of the guilty party, separation of the «partners» and «reorganization» of the child's social environment. They aim at building confidence and self-esteem, teaching self-defence, reinstating the right of victims to exclusive possession and control over their bodies, giving them the right to say «no», encouraging them to turn to members of their own generation for sexual fulfillment, and showing them that they have a right to happiness.

Prevention

The prevention of reoccurrence of sexual abuse with the same child or with other children is an aim inherent in psychosocial treatment. Prevention of child sexual abuse, however, involves much more than the prevention of reoccurrence and psychosocial treatment for individual cases.

What exactly is involved then ?

As we have already pointed out, the abusers are men and, in a growing number of cases as we now realize, teenage boys. It would appear to be evident, then, that sex education for boys should be looked into a little more closely. Moreover, girls are not all being brought up to assume exclusive possession and control over their bodies. Also, we must not forget that boys are victims, too.

The time has come to ask ourselves if self-defence courses should be included in a child's sex education... Children should at least be taught a sexual code which professes respect for oneself and others, and freedom from stereotypes, obviously, insofar as the renunciation of relationships involving domination or possession is concerned.

But who is responsible for sex education and for the prevention of sexual abuse ?

It is obviously the family which plays the most important role. Most parents warn their children to be careful of strangers; they tell them not to take anything from them, not to get into their cars or let them take them anywhere. But how can a parent possibly warn a child about a danger that is close to home, or even in the home ? Who is responsible for parents ? Whose responsibility is it to show people how to be good parents - parents who do not act as if they own their children, and do not have the right to use them as they see fit ? Whose place is it to teach parents to perceive their children as separate individuals with rights of their own ?

The schools should have their share of the responsibility. Sex education is not a matter to be taken lightly. It should be handled by competent persons who transmit not only knowledge, but also notions of respect, morals and ethics.

There is a need for public information and education programs for everyone from the everyday citizen to the lobbyist, from the social agency worker to the person who maps out social and educational programs, from the social practitioner to the academic concerned with the social sciences and their application.

A Conclusion to this Introduction

Obviously, these cases are both touchy and complex. How can they be handled without stigmatizing or adding to the trauma ? How can

they be handled without stigmatizing or adding to the trauma ? How can one play down a situation which really is melodramatic ? How can one motivate people to become involved in real psycho-social treatment - counseling or therapy that is undertaken for reasons other than avoiding heavier penalties or providing an alibi ?

Even more complicated still - how do you handle a case in wich the victim is only three, five or nine years old ? As we will see further on, Québec's child victims of sexual abuse are very young (12 years old on the average) and they are often victims of a combination of physical and verbal violence as well as sexual abuse.

There are no easy answers, unfortunately... no fail-safe ways of treating these cases.

The best we can do is to pool our resources - the input of different opinions, specialties and experience acquired. We are banking on the transmission of knowledge and experience because we want to avoid having to retrace our steps each time; we hope to combine all this varied information in order to guarantee all children the protection, security and «room to grow» they deserve.

CHAPTER 1

RESEARCH PRESENTATION

The sharp increase in the number of children reported to be sexually abused led the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse to question the capacity of the social service network to provide the services needed.

Number of cases of sexual abuse reported to the CPJ in 1978, 1979, 1980 and 1981

Cases reported to the CPJ	1978		1979		1980		1981	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Sexual abuse	379	7.4	714	17.7	843	22.9	806	26.9
Overall cases of abuse reported to the CPJ	5089	100	4035	100	3681	100	2999	100

The referral rate per thousand for child sexual abuse has stayed close to 0.5, or one out of every 2 000 children in Québec:

0.404 in 1979
0.486 in 1980
0.471 in 1981.

Number of children in Québec for whom family allowance payments were made*

YEAR	1979	1980	1981
Number of children in Québec	1 767 222	1 735 442	1 712 881

*Source: Québec Family Allowance Plan

Does the number of known cases really tell us how many children are sexually abused ? Has the new Youth Protection Act really led to an improvement in detection of these cases ? It is not easy to answer these questions. The Comité de la protection de la jeunesse is, however, convinced that the cases reported are only the tip of the iceberg and that it cannot possibly situate them within a global context.

Research-Review Study

A research study was conducted in connection with the review of cases of sexual abuse reported to the Comité. The study made use of the review activities carried out by CPJ youth protection counselors, extending these activities to include others for the purpose of the research study. This research-review study covered all cases of sexual abuse reported in the first six months of 1981.

Individual Review

The information gathered made it clear to the counselors which situations needed to be followed up on and thoroughly reviewed: those of three children in the Montréal area, four in Bas Saint-Laurent/Gaspésie and one in Mauricie/Bois-Francs.

General Review

All of the information obtained was enlightening; it provided all sorts of data on the target clientele studied and its accessibility to the public service network.

The Research Itself

This was a research study of an «active» nature in that it necessarily led to intervention. Obviously the information collected in connection with this research study could not help but clarify the situation with respect to the services needed by this special

clientele - a clientele with which we are now much more familiar tanks to this research. It contributed, then, to greater compatibility between service supply and demand.

Objectives

The central aim of the research study was to determine whether or not the safety (security) or development of these children was still threatened. This implies research into the compatibility between the protection requirements of sexually abused children and the protection services provided.

In order to accomplish this central aim, the research team set out to paint a picture of the overall situation with regard to child protection so that the Comité could act on it and make the recommendations and take the steps it felt were appropriate.

Three main objectives, corresponding with those involved in reviewing all cases of children in need of protection, were therefore pursued:

- case identification and classification
- evaluation of the protection situation and of the compatibility between protection needs and steps taken
- steps recommended to improve services, if appropriate.

Scope

The whole target clientele was affected by the research study, and not merely a sample group from the cases of sexual abuse reported pursuant to subparagraph (f) of section 38 of the Youth Protection Act.

Timing

By reviewing in 1982 the situations of children reported in the first six months of 1981 to be sexually, and sometimes otherwise,

abused, we felt that we would be in a position to review both the protection services provided as well as those required.

Methodological Approach

With our objectives in mind, we developed and pre-tested two measurement instruments - questionnaire forms - for collecting data. These two questionnaires correspond to two consecutive stages in the research, each of which represents a study in itself: one on the processing and management of reported cases of sexual abuse and the other on the management of a specific type of sexual abuse, father-daughter incest.

I. Management of sexual abuse cases: (the subject of this report)

The first questionnaire used covered factual information on all the cases of sexual abuse reported between January 1 and June 30, 1981.

The questions asked involved:

- identification of the victim: sex, age, environment or surroundings, etc.
- identification of the informants and their relationship with the child
- identification of the abusers and their relationship with the child
- youth protection director's diagnosis, evaluation and disposition of the case and its handling (judicial or non-judicial intervention) up to delegation of services and closing of file (if applicable)
- comments of CPJ counselors on these first stages in the social protection process.

II. Social treatment of father-daughter incest cases

The second questionnaire was used to study the medium and long-term management of father-daughter incest cases (a separate report will be made on this study).

CHAPTER 2

HOW CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE REPORTS WERE DEALT WITH

Highlights

- In the first six months of 1981, 445 cases of child sexual abuse reported to youth protection directors were referred to the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse (CPJ), and included in our research on the protection of sexually abused children. Forty-two of these cases were eliminated from our study group - having been referred by mistake - leaving us with 403 cases of children reported to be sexually abused.

- Almost all of these reports (84%) were referred to youth protection services for verification/evaluation/disposition. A few of them (4) were dealt with immediately, and either judicial or «voluntary» measures applied. In some case (8%), professional opinions or evaluations were requested from other social service centres or agencies which were already familiar with these cases. A few of the files were closed immediately after the cases were reported (3%). In 7% of the cases, analysis of the situation did not go any further: 13 cases were closed immediately after they were reported (3%) and, in 16 cases, there was no information available above and beyond that given in the report form (4%). Three hundred and seventy-four cases were retained by the youth protection network (93%) and therefore remained in our study group. Two regions were noted for the high proportion of cases closed immediately after being reported: Saguenay/Lac Saint-Jean (48%) and the Richelieu area (22%). Case files were immediately closed in from 0% to 10% of the cases in all other areas.

- The CPJ youth protection counselors agreed with the disposition of the reports in almost all cases (95%). Differences of opinion were more common in the Saguenay/Lac Saint-Jean area (22%) and in Montréal-Ouest (1) (10%).

- Of the 374 cases retained, 222 (59%) were diagnosed as «founded» cases of sexual abuse - in other words, cases in which the safety or development of the children involved was threatened. Over one case out of four (27%) was considered «unfounded» and the remainder (14%) were either considered to be questionable or high-risk situations, or were held in abeyance.

- More often than not, the CPJ youth protection counselors agreed with the «unfounded» diagnosis given (85%).

- There were 273 children affected by youth protection service decision regarding the case disposition of children whose safety or development appeared compromised. Forty percent of these cases (108) were closed after the diagnosis had been made, when the DYP (director of youth protection) concluded that the children's safety and development were no longer threatened. Approximately one-half of them (132 or 48%) were treated with «voluntary measures» once the parents and children agreed to undergo the psychosocial treatment proposed by youth protection services. Some of them appeared before the Youth Court (21 or 8%) and a few other cases were held in abeyance by youth protection services (11 or 4%).

- The CPJ youth protection counselors agreed with the youth protection service dispositions in almost all of the cases (87%).

- The CPJ youth protection counselors felt that the protection of the majority of these children was ensured (291 or 72%). In their opinion, however, the safety or development of more than one child out of four (28%) either continued to be compromised (45 or 11%) or was difficult to evaluate (67 or 17%).

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(1) When we refer to Montréal-Ouest we mean the predominantly Anglophone territory covered by the Ville Marie social service centre and the Jewish Family Services social service centre.

CHAPTER 3

THE CASES REPORTED

Highlights

- Cases of child sexual abuse were reported in all of Québec's socio-sanitary regions. The percentage distribution of cases reported reflects the overall distribution of children in Québec's regions; three regions were, however, over-represented - Outaouais, Laurentides/Lanaudière, and Québec City.

- Four out of five (80%) of these children were girls.

- The children reported to be abused were young - an average 12 years old. The boys were slightly younger than the girls: 57% of the boys were 12 or under (as opposed to 40% of the girls). The children in the Estrie region were much younger - eight and one half years old on the average.

- The situations of a substantial minority of these children were multiple, i.e., report included more than one child at a time (39%), most of the latter being children in the same family (34%); 62% of these cases concerned boys and 33% girls.

- In close to one case out of five (19%), the report described the child's situation as involving sexual abuse as well as other types of abuse; there were more cases of «multiple» abuse amoung the younger children (27% of the 0- to 5- year-olds, 20% of the 6- to 12 - year-olds, 19% of the 13 - and 14 - year-olds and 14% of the 15 - to 17 - year-olds).

- In a large minority of the cases (40%), a social service centre was already familiar with the child reported to be a victim.

- Most of these children were living with their families when their cases were reported (84%), although only 49% of them were living with both parents. A greater proportion of the youngsters with whom a social service centre was already familiar (23% as opposed to 7% of the others) were living in a foster environment, and only half of them had always lived with their families (50% as opposed to 76% of the others).

- One out of four of these children (28%) had already been mentioned in at least one other report made to the director of youth protection, and one out of four of the previous reports involved sexual abuse.

- Fifty-seven percent of these cases were reported by the four following groups: a police officer (17%), a member of the child's immediate family - mother, father, brother or sister - (17%), a school board employee (12%) or a member of the social service centre staff (11%).

- The person reported to be the abuser was almost always male (97%).

- A majority of the reports involved incest (63%), father-daughter incest being the most prevalent (48%).

- It appears that the person reported to be the abuser was «someone in the family» more often than not (63%).

- In the cases involving abusive third parties, non-related persons in other words (27%), the third party in question was almost always known to the child concerned (25%), and sometimes was even in a position of responsibility in relation to the child (6%: guardian, teachers, adults in reception centres, etc.).

CHAPTER 4

VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION GIVEN IN REPORTS

Highlights

- Approximately three-quarters of all the verifications (78%) were handled by the youth protection services.

- In one case out of five (22%), another service handled the verification - very often the police (10% of all cases evaluated).

- The four categories of persons interviewed in the majority of the cases evaluated were the mothers of the abused children (87%), the children themselves (85%), their fathers (66%) and the alleged abusers (64%).

- Three other categories of persons were interviewed in a significant minority of the cases: the children's brothers or sisters (43%), school teachers or principals (30%) and police officers, or their investigation reports, (28%).

- The victims were not confronted with the alleged abusers very often (28%). This is partly explained by the fact that the children reported to be abused were very young (12 years old on the average), since the proportion of confrontations increased with age: 12% of the 0- to 5-year-olds, 20% of the 6- to 12-year-olds, 26% of the 13- and 14-year-olds and 42% of the 15- to 17-year-olds.

- For the most part, statements were taken from the persons involved in the verification phase (the children reported to be abused, the parents responsible for their care, the alleged abusers and the other children in the families) either in their homes or during an office interview.

- As for the alleged abusers, they were not interviewed in 35% of the cases: not involved in the verification phase in 23% of the cases, information on how they were contacted not available in 9% of the cases, contacted by telephone only in 2% of the cases and 1% of the cases do not apply.

- Complementary examinations or expert evaluations other than family and social evaluations were fairly rare; medical examinations were not even given all that often (28%).

- In some cases (14%), children who required medical examinations were accompanied by social workers or school employees.

- In half of the cases (50%), there were complementary case evaluation discussions; 20% of them took place within the youth protection services and 30%, between youth protection staff and people from other services (administered by social service centres or other agencies).

CHAPTER 5

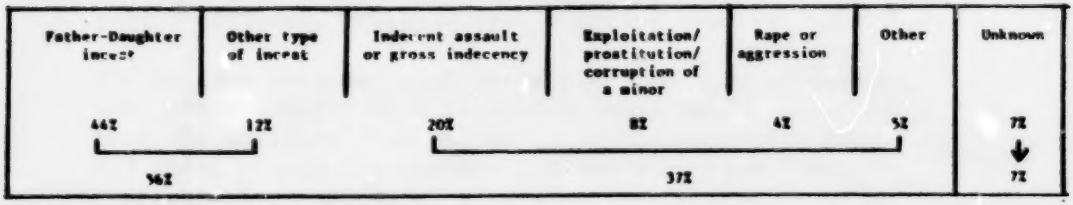
AFTER VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION REPORTED:

YOUTH PROTECTION DIRECTOR'S DIAGNOSIS

Highlights

- The majority of the cases evaluated were considered founded (59%) and many were held to be questionable or at risk or held in abeyance (12%). The youth protection diagnosis was unknown in a few of the cases (2%) and over one report out of four (27%) was considered unfounded. Once the unfounded cases were eliminated, 73% of the cases evaluated remained.

- Of the 273 remaining cases of sexual abuse, the majority (56%) involved incest and, most of the time (44%), father-daughter incest specifically. These 273 cases were broken down into the following types of abuse:



- Half of the sexual acts committed by abusers involved sexual advances, fondling, petting or sex play, 12% involved oral sex (fellatio/cunnilingus) and 19%, vaginal or anal penetration.

- The sexual acts committed by abusers were more and more involved as the age of the victims increased in that more of the older children were victims of penetration: 32% of the 15 - to 17-year-olds, 10% of the 13 and -14-year-olds, 8% of the 6 to 12-year-olds and 10% of the 0 to 5-year-olds. It was also clearer what acts had actually been committed in the case of the older children: the proportion of unknown acts decreased as age increased (32% of the 0 to 5-year-olds, 21% of the 6 to 12-year-olds, 15% of the 13 and 14-year-olds and 6% of the 15 to 17-year-olds).

- The proportions of boys and of girls abused by acts involving fondling or sex play were about equal (36% and 37%). More of the boys were victims of oral sex (fellation/cunnilingus: 26% as opposed to 8% of the girls). More of the girls were victims of vaginal or anal penetration (22% as opposed to 4% of the boys).

Acts Committed and Type of Abuse

- These differences, reflected by the age and sex of the victims, in the sexual acts committed by abusers, influenced the type of abuse involved.

- The majority of the father-daughter incest cases (61%) involved fondling or sex play only, 12% involved oral sex (fellation/cunnilingus) and 22%, penetration. More of these cases, then, involved «incestuous behaviour» than incest as it is legally defined in the Criminal Code (1).

- The acts involved in the other types of incest were similar to those encountered in the father-daughter incest cases: 50% involved fondling or sex play, 13% fellatio/cunnilingus and 25%, penetration.

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(1) Section 150 of the Criminal Code limits de definition of incest to «sexual intercourse» between a child and a blood relative, and jurisprudence tells us that «sexual intercourse» is taken to mean vaginal penetration.

- Vaginal or anal penetration occurred in almost all the cases of rape or aggression (82%).

- In the cases of indecent assault or gross indecency, the acts committed were fondling and sex play in the majority of the cases (65%), fellatio/cunnilingus in one case out of five (19%) and vaginal or anal penetration in 7% of the cases.

Duration of Sexual Abuse

- Half of the sexual abuse cases retained (51%) involved abuse of an ongoing nature. This was especially true in the cases of father-daughter incest (68%), exploitation/prostitution/ corruption of a minor (68%) and other incest (56%). The rape or aggression cases were more inclined to involve isolated incidents (73%), and the cases of indecent assault or gross indecency varied, some of them involving an ongoing situation (35%), some a number of episodes (35%) and the others one isolated incident (28%).

- The situations involving ongoing abuse lasted an average of one and a half years (19 months). When the incest cases were reported, the situations had been going of for longer: an average 22 1/2 months in the father-daughter incest cases and 20 months in the other incest cases. On the average, the situations involving exploitation/prostutition/ corruption of a minor had been going or for over a year (15 months), and those involving indecent assault or gross indecency, for eight months.

Violence and Sexual Abuse

- At least one form of violence was used in three cases out of ten (30%); the proportion, however, was much higher (56%) when limited strictly to those cases where this information was specified (53% answered).

- Depending on the type of abuse involved, violence was used not only in the cases of rape or aggression (100%), but also in the majority of the incest situations (72% of the father-daughter incest cases and 54% of the other incest cases, where an answer was given to this question).

Special Circumstances

- In 18% of the father-daughter incest cases, the abusive father was not living with the victim and the abuse occurred when he took her out. One out of ten abusive fathers (9%) were living alone with their children.

- In 16% of the other incest cases, the abusive brother, half brother, uncle or grandfather was the regular caretaker or sitter of the youngsters in the family.

Profile of Abusers

- Ninety-seven percent were male.

- Ninety-two percent were known by the child victim, and 69% were «family members».

- Fourteen percent of the victims were abused by two persons or more. Twelve percent of the father-daughter incest victims were also victims of another form of incest. There were a few cases where abuse occurred both within and outside the family.

- Of the abusers whose age was stipulated (236 out of 310), most were mature adults (73% were 30 or over). Many were young (27% under 30), however, and a nomber of these were teenagers (11% between 14 and 17).

Social Problems in Addition to Sexual Abuse

- The diagnoses of the youth protection directors were depressing in that they showed the majority of the children (71%) as suffering

from at least one additional problem to that of sexual abuse.

- A high proportion of the fathers in theses families (26%) had drinking problems, many of the parents were mentally unstable (11% of the fathers and 16% of the mothers), some of the mothers had drinking problems (7%) and some of the fathers were known for criminal behaviour (7%).

- Many of these children had serious behavioural problems (23% of the victims and, in 21% of the cases, at least one other child in the family) as well as learning disabilities (18% of the victims and, in 17% of the cases, at least one other child in the family). Several of the children suffered from mental deficiency (7% of the victims and, in 10% of the families, at least one other child) and physical impairments (one child other than the victim in 6% of the families), and there was juvenile delinquency in many of the children other than the victims (8% of the families).

Profile of Victims

- Four out of every five child victims were girls. The average age (at the time of the first incident of sexual abuse) in the cases retained was 12.1 years whereas it was 10.9 years in the cases considered unfounded. More of the children in the cases retained were from families already known to social service centres (44%). The youth protection director's diagnoses would indicate that there was a greater tendency to retain sexual abuse cases involving teenagers or children from families already known to social wervice centres.

Profile of Victims According to Type of Sexual Abuse

- The majority of the abused females were victims of father-daughter incest (55%). On the average, they were 13 when the abuse was reported and 11 when it began; the majority were between six and 12 when the abuse began (55%). Almost all of these girls were living in their homes when the report

was made (93%), many with both parents (59%), some with their mothers and without their fathers (20%) and 14% with their fathers and without their mothers (17 out of the 26 children, or 65% of those who were living in single-parent households headed by their fathers). In many of these cases (44%), the families were already known to the social service centre when the abuse was reported.

- As in the above group, the number of victims of a form of incest other than father-daughter incest increased with age: 1% were between 0 and five years old, 26% between six and 12, 28% 13 or 14, and 35% between 15 and 17. They were an average 12.1 years old when the report was made, and 9.6 years old when the abuse began. The majority of these victims of another form of abuse were female (79%). Brother-sister incest was the most common form encountered (41%), followed by uncle-niece incest (20%) and grandfather-granddaughter incest (18%). There were quite a few cases of father-son incest (15%) and a much smaller number of cases involving uncle-nephew incest (4%) and mother-son incest (2%). Almost all of these victims were living in their homes when their cases were reported (84%) and many of these lived with their mother only (40%). Some victims were in foster homes (16%). Almost half of the families were poor (47%) and about half too were already known to the social service centre when reported (48%).

- All of the victims of rape or aggression were female. Only two of them were under 13 years of age - one little girl in the zero to five bracket and another between six and 12; the average age was 13.3 years. This group was characterized by the high proportions of families with which social service centre were already familiar (55%) and of victims in a foster environment (1) (45%).

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(1) By «foster environment» we mean either a foster home or reception centre.

- Girls and boys alike were victims of indecent assault or gross indecency (43% were boys and 57% girls). These children were the youngest of all, with an average age of 10.3 years when the cases were reported; almost two-thirds of them were between six and 12 (63%). They were an average 9.9 years old when the abuse began. When their cases were reported, over three-quarters of the victims were living in their homes (79%), and many of these were living with their mother only (42%). Some victims were in a foster environment (17%), and almost half of the families were already known to the social service centre (46%).

- The victims in the exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor cases were in effect small clusters or networks of youngsters with similar characteristics. The majority were male (64% male, 36% female), and between 15 and 17 years old (59%). They were the oldest of all the victims, with an average age of 14 years (as opposed to the overall average of 12). This type of abuse tends, however, to be of an ongoing nature (68% of the cases), and the average age of the victims was 13.2 years when the abuse began. Like the victims of father-daughter incest, the majority of these children were still living with both parents when their cases were reported (64%). Almost one out of four (23%), though, were living in a foster environment.

CHAPTER 6

YOUTH PROTECTION DECISIONS REGARDING CASE DISPOSITION

Highlights

- Contact was made within seven days in 60% of the cases reported, 38% of the people involved being contacted the actuel day the report was made.

- Nevertheless, 40% had a longer wait: 20% between eight and 30 days, 11% between one and three months, and 9% over three months (4% between six and 12 months and 1% - the cases of four children - over a year).

- On the whole, the average lapse of time before the first appointment or contact was five weeks.

- In cases later to be considered founded, the lapse of time was about half that encountered in cases diagnosed afterwards as unfounded: 25 days as opposed to 49 days.

- The average lapse of time before contact varied according to type of abuse:

  . 8 days for rape cases,
  . 21 days for father-daughter incest cases,
  . 26 days for other incest cases,
  . 29 days for cases involving exploitation/prostitution/ corruption of a minor, and
  . 43 days for cases of indecent assault or gross indecency.

- The older the victims, the shorter the lapse of time:

  . 23 days for the 15 to 17 year olds,
  . 28 days for the 13 and 14 year olds,
  . 39 days for the 6 to 12 year olds,
  . 73 days for the 0 to 5 year olds.

- Sixty-nine percent of the child abuse cases reported were given priority.

- In one case out of four (24%), the youth protection services used emergency measures to protect the children concerned. This proportion varied according to the type of abuse inflicted: more of the incest victims needed emergency protection measures (33% of the father-daughter incest victims and 25% of the other incest victims), whereas emergency measures were applied in only 19% of the indecent assault or gross indecency cases, 14% of the exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor cases, and none of the rape or aggression cases.

- The majority of the child victims of sexual abuse were nervous at the time of their first contact with the youth protection services (62%), regardless of the type of sexual abuse sustained. The majority decreased however, among victims of indecent assault or gross indecency (51%).

- The families were evaluated for their capacity for stabilizing or clearing up the problem situation; the results showed that they were divided in that this capacity was considered great in 43% of the families, poor in 42%, and «average» in 15%.

- After the situations were evaluated, the youth protection directors decided to propose voluntary measures for protection and rectification of the situation in about one case out of two (48%) and to refer a number of the sexual abuse victims to the Youth Court (8%).

- In a high proportion of the situations evaluated (40%), the youth protection directors decided to close the case. Sixteen percent of these case, however, were retained by the social service centres, but handled in a different capacity because they were not considered covered by the Youth Protection Act. A few other cases (4%) were held in abeyance or for special management by the youth protection services.

- In the majority of the cases closed by the youth protection directors (75%), it was considered quite likely that the families would be capable of solving their problems. The capacity for coping was considered poor or nil in almost all the cases referred to the Youth Court (85%), however. It was great or average in many of the cases (43%) where the youth protection directors decided to propose voluntary measures for rectifying the situation (so the results looked promising), but poor or nil in even more (57%) of these cases (where the chances of applying the voluntary measures did not look as good).

- The father-daughter incest cases appeared quite problematical: less than a third showed a strong family capacity for solving their problems while voluntary measures for protection and rectification of the situation were proposed in 52% of the cases.

- After the youth protection director's decision regarding disposition of the cases retained, about one-half of the cases reported were slated for «follow-up» (52%).

- After the youth protection director's decision, a large majority (64%) of the indecent assault or gross indecency cases reported were closed, along with over half the exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor cases (52%) and incest cases not involving father-daughter incest (52%). A sizable minority (47%) of the cases involving father-daughter incest and of those involving rape or aggression (43%) were also closed at this point.

- After the youth protection director's decision, more of the cases involving children 12 or under when reported were closed: 59% of those involving 0 to 5 year olds and 53% of those involving 6 to 12 year olds.

- After the youth protection director's decision, files were not as inclined to be closed in cases involving families with

which a social sercice centre was already familiar (58% of the new cases were closed and only 34% percent of the known cases).

- The results show a case disposition tendency towards case management:

  . in more of the cases already handled by social service centres (66% as opposed to 42% of the new cases);

  . in more cases involving girls (53% as opposed to 46% of the cases reported involving boys);

  . in more of the cases involving teenagers (59% of the children who were 13 or 14 when the report was made and 55% of those between 15 and 17, as opposed to 41% of the 0 to 5 year olds and 47% of the 6 to 12 year olds);

  . in more of the father-daughter incest cases (53%) and rape or aggression cases (57%) than the other abuse cases (48% of the other incest cases, 48% of the exploitation/prostitution/ corruption of a minor cases, and 36% only of the indecent assault or gross indecency cases).

CHAPTER 7

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE CASES HELD OVER FOR FURTHER MANAGEMENT

Highlights

- 213 children were provided access to follow-up by social and/or judicial public services. These 213 children represent:
  - 78% of the cases retained (213 out of 273),
  - 57% of the cases verified and evaluated (213 out of 374),
  - 53% of the cases reported (213 out of 403).
- The majority of the children involved in these cases were directed towards case management (82%, or 175 out of 213). Approximately one out of five (18%), however, was steered towards judicial intervention.

JUDICIAL INTERVENTION

- The cases of 69 children were brought before the court - more than the 18% (N = 38) directed towards judicial intervention.
- The cases of 40 children were brought before the Youth Court, 17 before the Court of the Sessions of the Peace, nine before both the Youth Court and the Court of the Sessions of the Peace, two before the Family Division of the Superior Court, and one before both the Youth Court and the Family Division of the Superior Court.

Superior Court (Family Division)

- The cases of four children were referred to the Superior Court after the mother of three of these children, two of whom are sisters, filed for divorce, and one of the petitions (involving one child only) was withdrawn. The other court case concerned the father's visiting rights (a case which was also referred to the Youth Court for a petition regarding protection).

Court of the Sessions of the Peace

- The cases of 26 children were tried by the Court of the Sessions of the Peace. They concerned 12 victims of father-daughter incest, four victims of another form of incest and 10 victims of indecent assault or gross indecency.

- The cases of these 26 children involved 17 abusers: one child each in 11 cases, two each in five cases, and five children in the case of the remaining person charged.

- The cases were tried before a judge only.

- A verdict of guilty was handed down in 14 cases; the verdict in the other three cases was not known.

- Eight of the 14 defendants (57%) were sentenced to a prison term and some of them fined in addition, four were released on probation, one was fined, and the sentence of the 14th defendant was unknown. The prison terms varied from weekends to from five to ten years, and the fines varied from $200. to $1 000.

Youth Court

- The case of 50 victims were brought before the Youth Court; those of five of them were withdrawn.

- The majority of these 50 children were victims of incest (58%) - 24 (48%) victims of father-daughter incest and five

(10%) of another form of incest. Eleven children (22%) were victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor, seven (14%) victims of indecent assault or gross indecency, one (2%) a victim of rape or aggression and one (2%) a victim of an unspecified type of abuse.

- The complaints withdrawn involved four cases of father-daughter incest and one case of mother-son incest.

- Motions for protection were made in the cases of about half of these 45 children; there were 18 motions for protection alone and motions for protection associated with proceeding against the offender in the cases of five children. There were a total 23 motions for protection (51% of the 45 children). The other cases (49%) involved proceedings against the abusers only; there were seven adult offenders (who had abused 19 children) and two teenage offenders (three children abused).

- In the cases of 21 of the 23 children affected by motions for protection, the judge concluded that their health and/or security (safety) and/or development were compromised and ordered the removal of 18 of the 21 children from their homes. Nine of them were placed in foster homes, eight in reception centres, and one with other people outside the home; the other three children remained in their homes and case management was ordered.

- The Youth Court was also called upon to deliver a verdict in the cases of 13 abusers: eleven adults and two teenagers. The teenagers were sent to reception centres, one of which was in a security unit. The case of one father accused of incest with four of his children (girls and boys) was referred to the Court of the Sessions of the Peace, five abusive adults were sentenced to prison and, in one case, fined as well, two were fined and three others were released on probation.

CASE MANAGEMENT

- The cases of 178 children were directed towards follow-up or case management: 132 for the proposal of voluntary measures

for protection and rectification of the situation, 43 for case management on a different basis than the Youth Protection Act, and three others which were probably among those held in abeyance at the youth protection service. These 178 children represented 65% of the 273 cases retained after the unfounded cases were eliminated; they constitute at least half of all the case reports considered admissible (48%, N = 374), and 44% of all cases reported (N = 403).

- The children reported to be sexually abused who were later directed towards case management represented the majority in two regions:

  - Montréal-Métropolitain (Francophone): 81%

  - Côte-Nord: 78%

  In the other regions, they were a minority varying from 19% to 45% of reports.

- Almost all of the cases directed towards case management were handled by the social service centres (90%). In a few cases (11%), the social service centres collaborated with other agencies in providing services.

- The voluntary measures proposed by the youth protection services and other social measures (outside the authority of the director of youth protection) were designed to keep sexual abuse victims in their homes (66% of the cases). One child out of three, however, was removed from his or her environment (34%); some of these children were placed in foster homes (20%), others in reception centres (10%), and a few in the care of people outside the home (4%).

- There were proportionately more children taken out of their family environment among victims of a form of incest other than father-daughter incest (44%), victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor (44%), and victims of an

unspecified type of abuse (47%). Victims of father-daughter incest were removed from their homes in the same proportion as that of the group as a whole (34%).

- The children placed in reception centres were those with whom the social service centres were already familiar before the sexual abuse report was made.

- The extent of motivation to cooperate with these measures varied depending on the person's role. Most of the victims appeared willing to cooperate fully (89%), except in about one case out of ten in the overall study group, more or less according to type of abuse. The victims who were not considered ready to cooperate with case management were: none of the rape or aggression victims, 11% of the father-daughter incest victims, 12% of the victims of a different form of incest, 12% of the victims of an unspecified type of abuse, and 28% of the victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor.

- A large majority of the parents responsible for the protection of these children appeared ready and willing to cooperate (71%), although the proportion varied depending upon the type of abuse involved. The 30% of the parents in the overall group considered unwilling to cooperate included 10% only of the parents of victims of indecent assault or gross indecency, and 21% of the parents of victims of unspecified abuse, 29% of those of victims of rape or aggression, 31% of the mothers of victims of father-daughter incest, 39% of the parents of victims of another form of incest and 43% of those of victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor.

- In the case of the abusers themselves, often their degree of motivation was not known (30%) or they were not affected by the measures (14%). The majority of those considered to be affected and whose motivation was known appeared willing to cooperate with social measures (60%). This proportion, however, varied greatly depending on the type of abuse; the

majority was very large in the indecent assault and gross indecency cases (88%) and sizable in the father-daughter incest cases (65%), but there was only a minority in the other incest cases (34%).

CHAPTER 8

INTERVENTION OVERVIEW

Highlights

- On the whole, for the social system to evaluate the cases of child victims of sexual abuse and direct them towards social intervention:
  - an average of five weeks elapsed from the date of the report to the first contact initiated by the youth protection service with the victim and/or his or her parents,
  - an average of three and one-half weeks elapsed from the date of the first contact to that of the signing of consent to the application of corrective measures,
  - an average of five weeks elapsed from the time of the youth protection director's decision, or that of the Youth Court, to delegation of the case management;
  - for an average of 13 1/2 weeks altogether.
- in a majority of the cases (56%), protective measures had not been renewed when the research study was done - mostly because the mandatory measures were still being applied and the cases wihch involved voluntary measures had either been closed (N = 34) or redirected towards management under the Act respecting health services and social services (N = 18) instead of under the Youth Protection Act.
- The protective measures were considered to have been «entirely applied» in a little over a third of the cases (38%), «partially applied» also in a little over a third (39%), possibly applied in one case out of 10 where the information was not available (12%), and not applied in one more case out of 10 (11%).

- At the time of our research study, half of the children slated for protective measures (49%) were still living in their homes, about four out of 10 (38%) had been placed elsewhere, and the information for one child out of 10 (13%) was not available.

- Many of the children living in their homes had returned there after being placed elsewhere and a few others were in the process of being reintegrated into their families.

- Very few of the children were permanently taken away from their families: 19 children in all, or 21% of the children placed outside of the home and 10% of the 198 children for whom protective measures were applied. Of these 19 children, 16 were girls and three were boys. Most of them (11 out of 19) were between 15 and 17, three were 13 or 14, and four were between six and 12; there were not any age five or under, and the age of the remaining child was unknown.

- When the research was completed, the youth protection counselors who collected the data gave their opinion on the status of all the children reported to be sexually abused - regardless of whether the cases had been considered founded or unfounded and whether or not protective measures had been applied. They stated that they were confident about the safety and protection of a majority of these children (72%).

- The youth protection counselors admitted that they were worried about the protection of over one child out of four (28%). These cases included those where the information was not complete enough to evaluate the protection provided (8%), those where the youngsters (6%) or their families (4%) were known to still be having problems, those where the families had moved and been lost track of (2%), those where the evaluation

appeared to have been deficient (6%), and those where protective measures had been discarded (0.5%).

- The cases where the youth protection counselors felt concerned about whether or not the safety and development of the children had been ensured included close to half of the reports which were not retained (14 ou of 29, or 48%) and over one-third of the father-daughter incest cases retained and considered founded (42 ou of 121, or 25%).

- The counselors' uncertainty as to the protection of the father-daughter incest victims explains the fact that there was more uncertainty about the 13 and 14 year olds than the youngsters in the other age groups and about the child victims in regions where father-daughter incest was the most prevalent.

CONCLUSION

This first research study, then, follows the various stages involved in handling the cases of children reported to be sexually abused, to see which ones were provided with case management. The central theme is their access to services. The nature and intensity of follow-up or case management is the theme of the second study, devoted to the psychosocial treatment of father-daughter incest cases only; it will be presented in a separate report.

Chapter Contents

This conclusion covers four main subjects:

- research findings,
- considerations regarding the people involved,
- intervention considerations,
- questions for debate.

Research Findings

Three points stand out among the research findings presented in this report.

First Finding: Although there are some variations, these cases of sexually abused children are much like those documented in the U.S.

Second Finding: The victims' profiles very according to the type of sexual abuse sustained, which determines access to case management.

Third Finding: For the most part, the youth protection conselors from the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse, who collected the data for this research study, agreed with the decisions made by the youth protection directors at all stages in the process. They admitted, however, that they were

«worried» about the safety or development of one out of every four of these children (28%).

FIRST FINDING: Similarity between Profils of Sexually Abused Children in Québec and the U.S.

The cases of sexually abused children reported to Québec's directors of youth protection were similar to those reported to government child protection agencies in the U.S.

Their findings revealed:

- a predominance of girls; this predominance was not, however, as marked in Québec, where the ratio was four to one as opposed to 10 to one in the U.S.;(1)

- a predominance of incest cases both among the cases of abuse reported (60%) and those recognized (56%);

- a predominance of father-daughter incest cases (48% of all cases reported and 44% of recognized cases);

- a low percentage of strangers among the abusers (8% in our study);

- the existence of teenage abusers: one out of 10 abusers were 17 or under (11%);

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(1) The fact that so many boys were reported to be abused may be explained in part by the research period (the first six months of 1981). Nevertheless, the research study conducted by the CPJ on child abuse cases reported in 1975 and 1976 (Child Abuse in Québec, 1983) found that 70% of the sexually abused youngsters in their group were girls, and 30% boys. The other CPJ study, on the abused children included in «Opération 30 000» (Social Work with Maltreated Children: A Time for Re-evaluation ?, 1984), conducted in 1978, reported that 80% of the child victims of sexual abuse in their study were girls, and 20% boys. We have therefore come to the conclusion that our four to one ratio is probably very close to fact in Québec.

- a low percentage of cases referred to the criminal court of Youth Court (67, or 24%, of the 273 cases recognized, and 17% of all cases reported);

- the occurence in these families of problems (in addition to the fact of sexual abuse), and the far from encouraging diagnoses of the directors of youth protection: 71% of the recognized abusive families had additional problems, the most common ones being drinking (26% of the fathers and 7% of the mothers had a drinking problem), poor mental health (11% of the fathers and 16% of the mothers), criminal behaviour (7% of the fathers) and, among the children, behavioural problems, learning disabilities, mental deficiency, physical impairments, and juvenile delinquency in many victims, their brothers and their sisters.

Differences between Cases in Québec and U.S.

While abused children in the U.S. are often referred to as victims of «persuasion rather than coercion», in Québec sexually abused children are frequently victims of violence (56% of the 273 recognized cases): 100% of the rape or aggression victims, 72% of the father-daughter incest victims, and 54% of the other incest victims. Although in our study we did expand the definition of violence to include verbal violence (threats) - the American literature consulted did not cover this aspect of violence - the fact still remains that over one-third of the children (36%) were subjected to physical violence.

In addition, the children reported to be sexually abused in Québec were very young: 12.1 years of age on the average (43% were 12 or under when the report was made). Also, a sizable minority of these children were already known to the public network of social service centres: 161 out of 403, or 40% (the American literature consulted did not mention previous requests for psychosocial assistance).

SECOND FINDING: Factors Favouring Access to Case Management

The victims' profiles varied according to the type of sexual abuse sustained, which determined access to case management. The factors with the greatest influence on victims' profiles according to the type of abuse were: sex, age, and familiarity of a social service centre with the case before sexual abuse was reported.

Profile by Abuse Type

Profiles reveal the following distinctions according to:

Sex

- Girls only were victims of the reported and recognized cases of father-daughter incest and rape or sexual aggression;

- both girls and boys were victims of the other forms of incest (79% girls and 21% boys), indecent assault or gross indecency (57% girls and 43% boys) and exploitation/ prostitution/corruption of a minor (36% girls and a majority of boys: 64%).

Age

- It was the victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor who were the oldest when the cases were reported - 14 years on the average; most were 13 or over (77%), although one out of five (23%) was between six and 12; they were a year younger on the average (13) at the time of the first occurence of abuse and over one out of three was between six and 12 at that time (36%);

- the victims of rape or aggression were an average of 13.3 years when the cases were reported (82% were 13 or over); there were two very young children in this group - one between six and 12 and another five or under;

- the victims of father-daughter incest were an average 13 years when the cases were reported (74% were 13 or over, 22% were between six and 12 and 4% were five or under); at the time of the first episode of abuse, they were an average 11 years old and the majority (55%) were 12 or under (40% were between six and 12, 6% five or under and 34% 13 or over);

- the victims of a different form of incest than father-daughter incest were 11 years on the average when the report was submitted, and almost half of them (47%) were 12 or under (31% were between six and 12, 16% five or under and 53% 13 or over); at the time of the first abuse incident, the average age for this group was nine and one half, and two-thirds (68%) were under 12 (49% were between six and 12, 19% five or under and 32% 13 or over);

- the victims of indecent assault or gross indecency were the youngest, with an average age of 10.3 when the report was made, and 69% were 12 or under (63% between six and 12 and 21% 13 or over); when first abused, they were 10 on the average, and 75% were 12 or under.

Past Record

- A sizable minority of the cases of children reported to be sexually abused (40%), and about one half of the recognized cases (48%), were already known to social service centres;

- the children whose families were known to social service centres were not necessarily living in a foster environment; 48% of the recognized cases were known to social service centres before the report was made and only 14% lived in a foster environment;

- the children with whom social service centres were familiar before the report of sexual abuse came in included a majority of the rape or aggression victims (60%); a sizable minority of these youngsters were living in a foster environment when the report was made (45%);

- half of the child victims of indecent assault or gross indecency (50%) were already known to social service centres before the report was made, and a little over three-quarters of them were living with their families when the abuse was reported (79%);

- close to half of the child victims of incest other than father-daughter incest (49%) were already known to social service centres; 84% were living with their families when the report was made;

- almost half of the child victims of exploitation/ prostitution/corruption of a minor (47%) were known to social service centres; a minority of almost one out of four (23%) were living with their families when the report was made;

- the proportion of child victims of father-daughter incest with whom social service centres were already familiar was somewhat smaller, though significant, at 44%; almost all of these youngsters were living with their families when the report was made (93%).

Access to Case Management or Follow-up

Access to case management varied according to the characteristics of the children concerned and the type of sexual abuse sustained. There are two stages in the process where the cases in the social service network are directed towards case management or follow-up:

- when the director of youth protection makes a diagnosis of the situation, stating whether the safety (security) or development of the child is compromised or not and accordingly whether the sexual abuse in founded or not;

- when a decision is made regarding case disposition for the children whose cases are considered founded.

Diagnosis

In accordance with the youth protection directors' diagnoses, the cases of 273 out of the 403 children reported to be sexually abused (68%) were retained; the other 130 cases (32%) were closed. The diagnoses indicate a greater tendency to retain cases involving:

- teenagers;
- children already known within the social service centre network.

On the other hand, the diagnoses indicate a greater tendency to consider unfounded those cases involving:

- younger children: 44% of the children five or under reported to be abused, and 36% of those between six and 12 (as opposed to 25% of the 13 and 14 year olds and 31% of the 15 to 17 year olds);

- children in new cases, not previously known to social service centres: 39% of those reported (as opposed to 25% of the cases with which they were already familiar).

Case Disposition

The children whose cases were considered founded were directed towards case management either as soon as this diagnosis had been made or when a decision to do so was handed down by the Youht Court. Many of these cases, however, were closed at the time of the youth protection service's decision respecting case disposition; added to the 32% of previously closed cases, this meant that a total 48% of the cases were closed. Only about half, then, of the children reported to be abused (52%) were directed towards case management.

The decision regarding disposition of the recognized cases more often entailed case management in the case of:

- girls: 53% of the girls reported to be abused were directed towards case management;

- teenagers: 59% of the youngsters who were 13 or 14 when the report was made and 55% of those between 15 and 17;

- children with a previous record with a social service centre: 66% of the children in the reports who were already known to social service centres;

- victims of father-daughter incest: 53% of the cases reported;

- victims of rape or aggression: 57% of the cases reported.

On the other hand, the decision regarding disposition of the cases retained entailed the case's being closed more often in the case of:

- boys: 21% of the cases reported were closed at this point; added to the 33% already closed, this meant that 54% of the cases of boys reported to be abused were closed and 46% directed towards case management;

- youngsters who were between six and 12 when their cases were reported: 17% were closed at this point; added to the 36% already closed, this meant that 53% were closed altogether and 47% directed towards case management;

- children under five when their cases were reported: 15%; added to the 44% already closed, this made the total percentage of cases closed 59% and those directed towards case management 41%;

- children with whom social service centres were not already familiar: 19%; added to the 39% already closed, this meant that 58% were closed altogether and 42% directed towards case management;

- victims of indecent assault or gross indecency: 27%; added to the 37% already closed, this meant that 64% of these cases were closed altogether and 36% directed towards case management;

- victims of exploitation/prostitution/corruption of a minor: 33%; added to the 19% already closed, this brought the total to 52% with 48% directed towards case management;

- victims of incest other than father-daughter incest: 16% were closed at this point; added to the 36% already closed, this meant that 52% were closed altogether and 48% directed towards case management.

The cases of children 12 and under would appear to have been especially susceptible to closing. More of them were considered unfounded, and the average age of the children whose cases were considered unfounded corresponded to that of the children in the cases considered founded when the abuse began (10.9 years was the average age in the unfounded cases and 10.8 years the average age when the abuse began in the cases recognized as founded).

THIRD FINDING: Uncertainty on the part of CPJ Counselors

For the most part, the youth protection counselors from the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse, who collected the data for this study, agreed with the decisions made by the youth protection directors. They admitted, however, that they were «worried» about the safety or development of more than one out of four of these children (28%).

It should be pointed out, however, that their worry was sometimes based on a technical detail, such as a form missing from a file.

The counselors were worried about the situations of certain children for other reasons also and they were particularly concerned about:

- 21 (16%) of the 130 cases closed either when the report was processed or the cases diagnosed as unfounded (most of the children involved were 12 or under when the report was made);

- many of the father-daughter incest cases considered founded, in that they felt that the safety or development of over one out of five of the victims (22%) was still compromised;

- many (40%) of the victims who were 13 or 14 when the report was made;

- the cases in certain regional areas with greater concentrations of father-daughter incest cases and cases involving 13 and 14 year olds.

Considerations Regarding the People Involved

Victims

We have been referring to these children as victims throughout this report; it is by far the most appropriate term. It seems to us that these youngsters must clearly be considered victims first and foremost, regardless of any other problems they may have. They are victims!

Like all victims, these children suffer. It follows, then, that they have special needs.

First of all, they need to feel the compassion, willingess to help and warmth of others.

They also need the help of psychosocial treatment or therapy. This type of individual therapy, which is part and parcel of case management, is not so much analysis as personal growth («here and now») therapy - an approach which uses play and gestalt, and Carl Rogers' methods, and which may last anything from a few months to three years, depending on the people involved and their needs.

The first thing this kind of therapy allows people to do is release tension and express their feelings about the sexual abuse committed. The therapist then concentrates on developing the subjects' feelings of self-esteem, so that they may «turn the page», get on with their life and plan for the future.

After this phase involving the reinforcement of self-esteem, personal strength and self-defence abilities are worked on. While the individual counseling and case management are going on, small self-help groups are used to help restore suitable child and teenage roles and interests: the search for identity, socialization, attainment of autonomy, experience and development.

Victims 12 and Under

This research study revealed that there are major obstacles involved both in evaluating the cases of children 12 and under and in helping them. But these victims are the most vulnerable ones - most of the time the sexual abuse began before they were even 12. How can this problem be solved ?

Both evaluation and verification instruments would appear to leave much to be desired: investigations were delayed and there were long waiting periods. Then, the cases were often declared unfounded! The interviews required by the investigation process were certainly not easy to handle: the children were so young that they could be easily disturbed, made to feel guilty or even to feel they had to alter the truth somewhat.

The authors consulted for our research study on incest (1) suggested getting specific information from the informant first - information as to dates, sexual acts, witnesses, and so forth. They then suggested private interviews with the persons responsible for the care and protection of the children concerned (usually the mothers) to get their opinions on the information obtained. They suggested that the interview with the child victim be conducted in the presence of a person he or she trusted, as long as that person was willing (older sister, a favourite teacher, mother, etc.). They also suggested using play or drawing as interview tools - a little bit like the tests given by educational psychologists. It was also pointed out that the child should be firmly reassured at this point and made to understand that he or she had been the victim and not the cause of sexual abuse.

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(1) GIARETTO (Minnesota Program for Victims of Sexual Assault), among others... We do not necessarily subscribe to these suggestions but feel that they are well worth exploring, and using to create or alter work «tools».

One of the major pitfall encountered here is the disparity between the investigator's vocabulary and that of the child. It goes without saying that the counselor should speak at the child's level, using his or her language so that there are no misunderstandings. The authors did not all agree on the best place to meet the child victims: some felt the school or another part of the child's normal surroundings was best while others preferred the idea of using the investigator's or counselor's office. They do agree that it is best not to meet in the child's home; both the mother and child would be constantly interrupted, so they would find it harder to concentrate and easier to evade the issue at hand.

According to GIARETTO (1), the only way to treat children as young as these is to combine private sessions using play therapy, small group sessions (also using play therapy) and case management (lending support and accompanying them).

Cases Already Handled by Social Service Centres

The research study brought to light the added susceptibility of children with whom social service centres or public child and family assistance agencies were already familiar; 40% of the children reported to be sexually abused fell into this category.

It also showed that almost all of these families had other problems in addition to that of sexual abuse (83% as opposed to 58% of the «new» cases), and that there was often more than one additional problem (28% had five problems or more, 36% between two and five, 19% one only, and 17% none of the problems covered by the research study). They had 3.1 problems on the average (the average was 1.3 among the previously unknown families).

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(1) Integrated Treatment of Child Sexual Abuse, op.cit.

Social agencies and social workers are well acquainted with these «problem families» (those with more than one additional problem) and with the vulnerability of the children. How are these cases to be dealt with ? The question is an ideal one for debate, and social workers would certainly stand to benefit from any concrete and effective solutions arising from workshops or courses dealing with special or problem children.

These children are victims of abuse of all kinds. They are fragile and need to be «handled with care». Their problem homes do not give them the individual attention they need to develop fully. Is there any way that social intervention aimed at the family can make up for this lack of attention and help these children who are so surrounded by problems ? How can they be given the individual attention they desperateley need to defend themselved and build up a degree of «immunity» ?

Ideally, with these problem families, case management should involve generous doses of individual attention for all family members. This is obviously impossible but it was along these lines that the Comité de la protection de la jeunesse suggested that access to and use and development of available resources be increased: full and part-time day-care facilities, halfway houses, group homes, reception or drop-in centres, recreational groups and clubs, family helpers, visiting nurses, etc.(1) A new service suggested by some authors would take the form of a family support or helper (Corrigan refers to «family volunteers» (2) selected from the ranks of existing organizations. By helping out «wayward families» on a day-to-day basis, and for next

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(1) Comité pour la protection de la jeunesse, Premier rapport d'activité (first report on activities), gouvernement du Québec, Ministère de la Justice, Editeur officiel du Québec, Montréal, 1977.

(2) CORRIGAN, Michael, Judge, «The Juvenile Court and Community Involvement» in Osgoode Hall Law Journal, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1972.

to no pay, these family volunteers - people in the same socio-economic bracket as the families being helped - would make them into healthier «extended families» with greater stability. When we read about these experimental projects, we realize that there are many doors still open to us. We do not suggest using such projects as models, but rather offer them as inspirational guides for special programs which could easily be created and supervised by the local community service centres (CLSC), which, since they deal with smaller, more homegenous clienteles, are in a better position than the social service centres which cover such vast territories.

Men Who Sexually Abuse Children

The research study looked into the question of intervention dealing with male sexual abusers.

In our introduction, we pointed out the negative aspects of judicial intervention alone, which is limited to the question of whether or not the alleged molester is guilty and how to punish him. We also pointed out the fact that social intervention is much less concerned about the abuser, and our research study bore out this fact.

Almost all the abusers in our research sample were members of the child's family or persons from the immediate surroundings (8% only were exceptions). They were anything but total strangers, then, and often easy to trace as a result. Nevertheless, many of the abusers (35%) were not even interviewed during the verification phase. In addition, in many of those cases considered founded and then slated for case management, the extent of the abuser's motivation to cooperate with treatment was specified as «not applicable» (14%) or «not known» (30%) - in a total four cases out of 10, then, or 44%. Social intervention has been traditionally directed towards already motivated persons who ask for help. The idea was to let the client come to them instead of offering their services to anyone, and especially to people who had

not admitted that they were ready and willing to change. It is not all that surprising that social intervention did not have much to do with treating the abuser's «problem» in that the primary goal was to protect youngsters, in fact, the agencies involved were often relieved and too easily reassured when the abuser was out of the picture or out of the home. We have already indicated, however, that this is no guarantee of the child's safety: many children continue to be abused by fathers who no longer live with them - during visits or outings.

There would appear, then, to be a gap between judicial intervention, which is strictly punitive and involves only a very few cases (67, or 17%, of the 403 cases reported), and social intervention, which has very little to do with abusers. How can this gap be filled ? Here too, we feel that this question should be pondered and debated, not only by social workers, but also by all people involved in developing, demonstrating (educators) and promoting social programs and their implementation.

In our opinion, the ideal method would involve probation-type measures and bring the abuse to a halt. It would provide support and psychosocial therapy for concrete problems relating to alcoholism, mental health, work and unemployment, delinquency, and so forth. It was for this reason that we asked the following question in the introduction:

Would it not be better to combine, when necessary, judicial and social intervention in joint programs aimed at healing both the victim's scars and the abuser's «problem», so that the child and other children could be spared any further trauma ?

Young Sexual Abusers

We have already pointed out that of the recognized abusers whose ages were known (236 out of 330, or 72%), one out of 10 was a teenager 17 years or under (24, or 10%, of 236). Only six, however, and not 24, of the 403 cases of sexual abuse initially reported indicated that the abuser was a teenager: four who

were recognized to be victims and offenders in turn, and who were offenders only. What happened to the 18 others ? Who handled their cases ? We were unfortuna e y unable to find any answers to these questions. As for the six recognized abusers, we do not know whether social intervention included special therapy sessions for them.

Because of their abusive behaviour, these young people are «dangerous offenders» - they commit offences involving assault. From the little we know about them, it would appear that they are often victims as well as offenders, and that they are in dire need of treatment. Giaretto, for one, feels that what they mostly need is combined individual and group counseling. For our part, we believe that this kind of counseling, to be truly effective, should be undertaken within a framework of probation and rehabilitation - obviously without avoiding the issue of the abuser's sexual problems. Whether the offender is detained in a reception centre or treated according to «open» case management, it seems to us that he - and indeed all young people - should absolutely be steered towards a responsible approach to sexuality.

The Families

The research study also covered the youth protection directors' evaluations of the capacity of these families to solve their own problems.

This capacity was considered great in the majority of those cases closed by the youth protection directors (75%). It was considered poor or nil in most of the cases referred to the Youth Court (85%). It was considered great or average in many of the cases (43%) in which the youth protection directors proposed voluntary measures to rectify the situation (so the results looked promising), but poor or nil in even more (57%) of these cases (where the chances of applying these voluntary measures did not look so good).

The father-daughter incest cases appeared to be the most problematical: less than a third showed a strong family capacity for solving their problems while voluntary measures for protection and rectification of the situation were proposed in 52%.

Intervention Considerations

Processing delays

Psychosocial literature stresses the importance of responding promptly to all requests to protect physically or sexually abused children - primarily so that their safety may be ensured.

There is another reason, though: a child's or teenager's notion of time is quite different from that of an adult. The slightest delay in response may confuse the child and make him or her wonder what social intervention is all about and what all these strangers (social workers, etc.) really want. It makes it hard for the child to link intervention to his or her own particular case. Another problem with the least little holdup in processing is that the situation or people involved may have changed so much in the meantime that the initiatives taken are completely out of step, or inadequate.

We found that contact was made quite rapidly by the youth protection services in the majority of the cases: 60% within seven days (38% of which were received the actual day the report was made). A sizable minority (49%), however, had a longer wait; 20% of these were contacted between eight and 30 days after the report was submitted, but the other 20% were held up a long time - 11% between one and three months, 4% between three and six months, and 5% (these cases involved 17 children) over six months (four, or 1%, of which went over a year). The cases in this last group (the 5%) would really appear to us to have been «mislaid» by the evaluation system.

The average lapse of time for the cases as a whole was five weeks.

The cases of only a minority of the child victims were immediately delegated to caseworkers for management: one out of four of the recognized cases (65, or 24%, of the 273 cases retained). An average eight and one half weeks elapsed, then, between the time contact was first made for evaluation and verification, and delegation for application of concrete measures designed to assist the youngsters and their families. Because of this time lapse, the critical period and the impact of the report and of the evaluation and verification interviews cannot very often serve as a springboard for interest in psychosocial treatment. Also, a change of caseworker with delegation, whether there has been a delay or not, is liable to kill the interest in treatment of even the most enthusiastic of people.

Friends and Relatives

There are natural networks of friends and relatives who help each other out in all cultures. They are not as evident, however, in the environment of the abused child. This is hardly surprising, since, as the literature on children who are sexully abused by family members tells us, abusive behaviour is often passed on from generation to generation. Caution should be used, and indeed is used, when approaching the friends and relatives of these children for help.

Recent papers on sexually abused children refer to the "second generation of abused children" where abusive fathers become abusive grandfathers.

Our research study showed that there were four fairly frequent types of incest other than father-daughter incest: brother-sister incest (41%), uncle-niece incest

(20%), grandfather-granddaughter incest (18%) and father-son incest (15%).

A Little Used Resource: the Group Home

Group homes were not used very often; four children only were in group homes when the abuse was reported, and seven when we conducted our research study.

The fact is, though, that specialists highly recommend group homes for children who are taken out of their homes because they have been sexually abused by a family member.

In these cases, group homes are considered preferable to foster homes:

- because of the children's feelings of fear and insecurity towards adults;
- because of their inability to adjust to a new family and the undermining of foster home resources;
- because of their tendency to confuse any sign of attention or affection with a sexual advance, and to «sexualize» all human relationships.

Group homes are considered preferable to reception centres:

- because children such as these may feel that they have been punished instead of the abuser if they are put in reception centres,
- because they may feel that they are being treated like juvenile delinquents by being sent to reception centres, and this may heighten their feelings of guilt.

Group homes are only recommended as a temporary measure, however. They should be used to prepare the children concerned for a foster home or for return to their own homes. They are insurance against repeated failure and help prevent children from running away.

Questions for Debate

«Security» and Development or «Security» vs Development ?

We have now seen how access to case management varies greatly depending on the age of the child and type of abuse involved. Most of the younger children are left with their families, who are entrusted with their protection. Often a child is considered safe once the abuser has left the home and the file is accordingly closed - but we have seen how 18% of the father-daughter incest victims did not even live with their fathers !

According to our research results, the physical safety of the younger abused children would appear to be ensured by their families once the latter have been made fully aware of the child's situation through intervention during the verification phase. The Youth Protection Act is not merely concerned with the safety (security) of these children, however, but also with their development. According to Giaretto, their chances of developing are poor unless they undergo real therapy - where their emotions, their feelings and the psychological after-effects of the sexual abuse inflicted on them as children are dealt with. Immediate investment, then, in treatment is the only guarantee of a hopeful future for these people, and indeed for society as a whole.

Question: Should a specialized service be set up at the service of directors of youth protection for short-term individual and group counseling to be initiated along with evaluation ?

How Many Cases Should Be Accepted ?

There is a growing number of cases of child sexual abuse being reported every day. Under the present system, some of these cases are accepted and others rejected. More cases are accepted in some geographical areas.

Under the Youth Protection Act, all cases have to be reported and it is up to the youth protection directors to ensure the protection of children whose security (safety) or development is threatened by sexual abuse.

Question: Should all cases be accepted or should the Act be amended so that only some of the cases have to be reported ?

Question: How can all of the children whose cases are received be given the attention their development requires ?

How Can Abuse be Prevented ? (1)

The prevention of reoccurrence of sexual abuse with the same child or with other children is an aim inherent in psychosocial treatment. Prevention of reoccurrence, at the same time, prevents the occurrence of or alleviates many other social problems.

Prevention of child sexual abuse, however, involves much more than the prevention of reoccurrence and psychosocial treatment for individual cases.

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(1) This point was also taken up in the introduction.

As we have already pointed out, the abusers are men and, in a growing number of cases, as we now realise, teenage boys. It would appear to be evident, then, that sex education for boys should be looked into a little more closely. Neither girls not boys in fact - we must not forget that boys too are victims - are being taught to assume exclusive possession and control over their bodies and defence mechanisms are not being properly reinforced.

Obviously, the family plays the most important role in a child's sex education. Parents warn their children to «watch out for strangers»; they tell them not to take anything from them, not to get into their cars or let them take them anywhere. But how can a parent possibly warn a child about a danger that is close to home, or even in the home ? Who is responsible for parents ? Whose responsibility is it to show people how to be good parents - parents who do not act as if they own their children and do not have the right to use them as they see fit ? Whose place is it to teach parents to perceive their children as separate individuals with rights of their own ?

The principle of formal sex education is widely approved. School programs are in the making and future sexologists being trained in our universities. The need for these programs and for qualified individuals to teach them is pressing.

Quality sex education, then, is an absolute must. It should entail the transmission of a sexual ethic which professed respect for oneself and others, a sense of ownership of one's own body, and the right to say «no» and defend oneself.